

Peck Ranch Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary



Missouri Department of Conservation
June 2014



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is seeking public input as we develop and revise conservation area management plans.
- Peck Ranch Conservation Area is 23,763 acres of rugged, forested hills and hollow in northwest Carter County and eastern Shannon County. It is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Conservation areas support the Department's mission by offering places to restore and conserve fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. Conservation areas are different than state or local parks that may place a greater emphasis on team sports, recreational activities, or social gatherings.
- MDC conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (May 1-31, 2014) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 10-year management plan for Peck Ranch Conservation Area.
- During this time period (May 1-31, 2014), we heard comments from 59 respondents.
- Common themes heard during this idea gathering stage included suggestions to allow horseback riding on designated trails at Peck Ranch and support for natural community management.
- The Peck Ranch Conservation Area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year area management plan. The draft plan will be available online (likely October 2014) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

INTRODUCTION

Public Comment on Conservation Area Management Plans

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. MDC is in the multi-year process of updating management plans for conservation areas and invites public comments. To preview draft management plans and share comments online, visit mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

MDC conservation areas cover almost one million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Most Missourians are within a 30-minute drive of an MDC conservation area.

Missourians care about conservation and use conservation areas for many different reasons. These areas help people discover nature through various activities, and help make Missouri a great place to hunt, fish, and enjoy other outdoor activities. We want to know how conservation areas are important to Missourians. Encouraging public comments on Conservation Area Management Plans is part of MDC's ongoing efforts of working for and with Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish and wildlife.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the Wildlife Code of Missouri. MDC will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.

Questions? Please contact MDC Public Involvement Coordinator Amy Buechler at 573-522-4115 x3252, or amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov.

Peck Ranch Conservation Area

Peck Ranch Conservation Area is in northwest Carter County and eastern Shannon County, north of Fremont. The area consists of 23,763 acres of rugged, forested hills and hollows. Limestone and rhyolite glades provide natural openings among the oak-pine forest that dominates the region. Narrow ridges range from 900 to 1,000 feet in elevation. The area's highest point is Stegall Mountain, 1,348 feet above sea level. Rogers Creek and Mill Creek, which flow into the Current River, meander through the area.

In 1945, the Missouri Department of Conservation purchased Peck Ranch for wild turkey management. Today, diverse management techniques, including prescribed fire and forest products harvesting methods, are being used to maintain and restore the many natural communities on Peck Ranch. This conservation area was acquired in part through the Pittman-Robertson wildlife Restoration Act administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There are nine miles of the Ozark Trail connecting portions to the north maintained by the Ozarks National Scenic Riverways and to the south by the Mark Twain National Forest. This area is predominantly forest with nearly 1,500 acres in glades along with old fields, savanna, cropland, and some wetlands. Peck Ranch Conservation Area facilities and features include primitive camping, picnic areas, firearms range, viewing deck, 2 deer/turkey blinds, 1 intermittent stream, and 4 Natural Areas (Grassy Pond, Goldenseal, Stegall Mountain and Mule Hollow).

In 2010, Peck Ranch Conservation Area was chosen as the site for elk Reintroduction into Missouri. A temporary holding facility was created as well as a designated auto tour which allows users to see elk but also give the elk areas within the refuge that have minimal disturbance. In order to preserve herd health and protect the cows and calves during the calving season, managers and administrators have closed the refuge portion of the area yearly from April 1 to July 1 until a time to be determined.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (May 1-31, 2014) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 10-year management plan for Peck Ranch Conservation Area. The plan, once drafted, will be posted online (mdc.mo.gov/areaplans) for further public comment.

Public Involvement

The idea gathering phase for development of the Peck Ranch Conservation Area Management Plan ran from May 1-31, 2014. The objective of this phase was to inform stakeholders about the area planning process and ask them to share their ideas.

- Developed posters and business cards about Peck Ranch idea gathering phase and displayed/distributed at Peck Ranch, Twin Pines Conservation Education Center, Van Buren Forestry Office, and The Nature Conservancy office (Van Buren).
- Information and online comment form available at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.
- News release sent to local media outlets and posted on Missouri Department of Conservation Facebook page.
- Sent announcement to Twin Pines Conservation Education Center email list.
- Sent announcement to Area Plans email list (2,200 people).
- Sent mail or email to: neighboring landowners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local government offices.

Next steps

The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Peck Ranch Conservation Area. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely October 2014) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

Who responded?

Table 1. Total number of respondents commenting during the idea gathering phase (May 1-31, 2014) by respondent category.

Organization Type	Count
Individual citizens (no affiliation listed)	41
Horseback riding organizations (Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen – 13, Missouri Morgans, Monroe County Saddle Club, Ozark Ridge Riders – 2)	16
Other NGOs (National Wild Turkey Federation, Ozark Trail Association)	2
TOTAL	59

How they responded

Table 2. Total number of each response received.

Response Type	Count
Web Comment Form	58
Hard Copy Comment Form	1
TOTAL	59

Where respondents are from

Table 3. Total number of responses categorized by each respondent's location.

State	Count	Percent
Missouri	55	93%
Illinois	2	3%
Iowa	1	2%
Florida	1	2%
TOTAL	59	100%

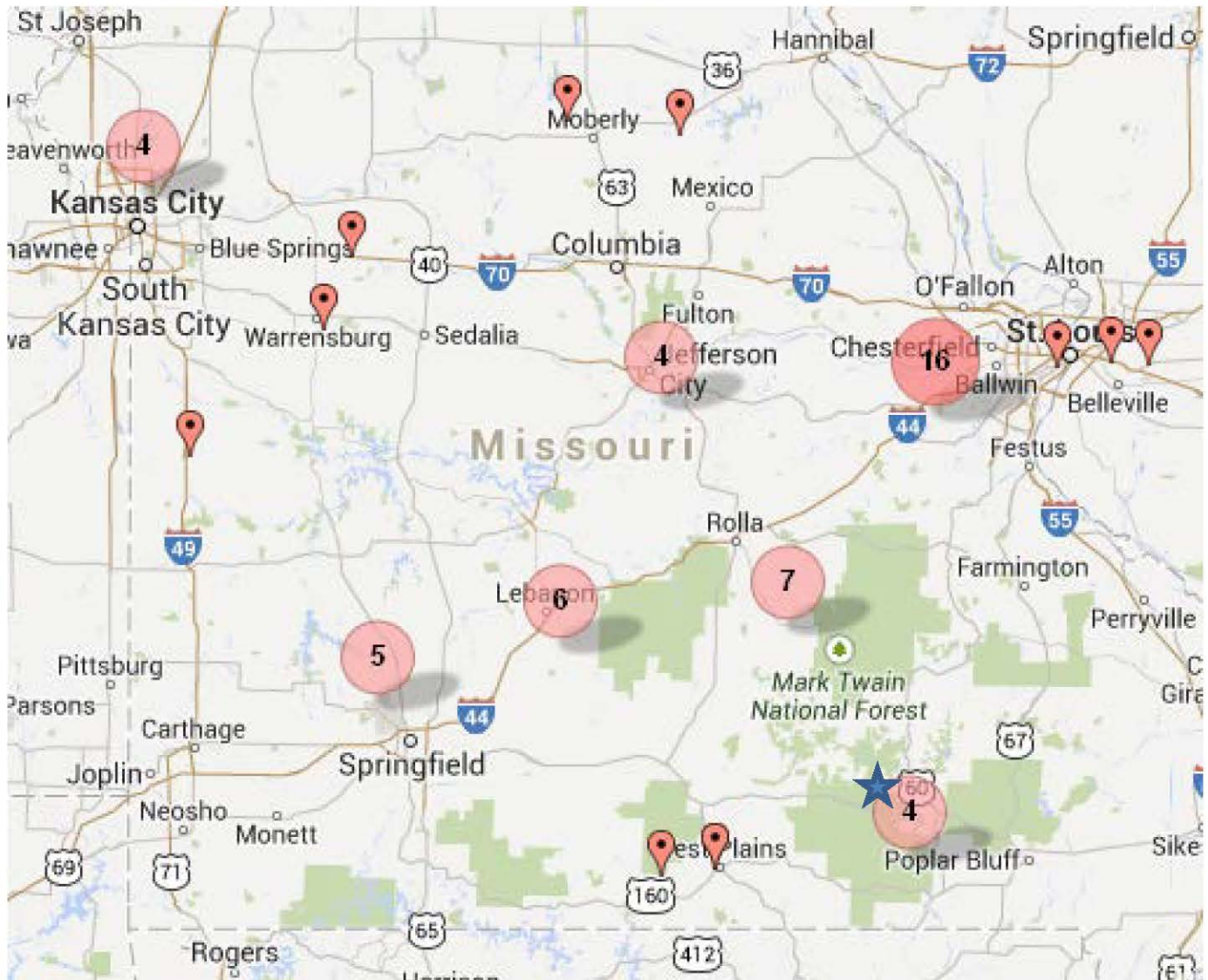
Map of respondent locations by zip code. ★ = Peck Ranch Conservation Area

The pinpoints below represent the central point of zip codes from which a public comment was received (they do not represent actual street addresses). Shaded circles with numbers show multiple responses from a geographic area.



Map of Missouri respondent locations by zip code. ★ = Peck Ranch Conservation Area

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THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH PECK RANCH CONSERVATION AREA IDEA GATHERING PHASE (May 1-31, 2014)

The Peck Ranch Conservation Center Idea Gathering Stage was available for a public idea gathering period May 1 – 31, 2014. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 59 respondents. A brief summary of public input themes can be found below. The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Peck Ranch Conservation Area. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely October 2014) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

Terrestrial Resource Management

- Supports continuing prescribed fire and restoration of open woodlands, savannas, and glades.
- Supports additional food plots (including alfalfa and other forages) to help retain elk on area and to promote turkey, deer, and elk.
- Opposes most growing season burns because of negative impact to turkeys.
- Supports continuing Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project (MOFEP) on Peck Ranch.
- Supports logging for management purposes; opposes logging for revenue purposes.
- Supports continuing to manage Peck Ranch primarily for wildlife and natural community restoration.

Public Use Management

Trails

- Concern about closure of Ozark Trail through Peck Ranch from April-July.
- Suggests providing alternative routes for mountain bikes using the Ozark Trail to take around the Peck Ranch refuge.
- Suggests adding designated equestrian trails to Peck Ranch.
 - Horseback riding allows aging and disabled citizens to get outside.
 - Horseback riding organizations are willing to help plan, maintain and manage trails.
 - Equestrian trails promote tourism for surrounding communities.
 - Horseback riding is a valid form of recreation on public lands.
 - Horseback riders practice “leave no trace behind.”
 - Peck Ranch is large enough to support multi-use trails without impacts to sensitive areas.

- Suggests connecting equestrian trails to other equestrian trails adjacent to Peck Ranch (including the Ozark Trail).
- Suggests allowing equestrian use on the Ozark Trail through Peck Ranch, allowing for a parallel trail where horse use on the Ozark Trail is not feasible.
- Ride regularly in other states with elk without problems.
- Trail riders, hikers, and mountain bikers can use same trails without conflicts.
- Opposes equestrian use on Peck Ranch.
- Opposes off-road ATV use on Peck Ranch.

Amenities

- Concern that there are fewer roads open for public to access deer hunting locations.
- Suggests adding an equestrian campground (including water, corrals, and bathroom facilities).

Hunting

- Concern with illegal activities observed on area (deer drives with dogs; spotlighting activity). Suggests limiting access points to Peck Ranch and housing a manager on the area.

Administrative Considerations

- Concern that planning team will not pay attention to comments received during comment period.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Peck Ranch Conservation Area Poster



We Want To Hear From You



As the Peck Ranch Conservation Area nears its 70th year, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is seeking visitor input to develop an Area Management Plan to guide the next 10 years.



Stop by the front desk to pick up a comment card or visit mdc.mo.gov/areaplans to submit comments online.

The plan will focus on land management and public use. The Peck Ranch CA is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by MDC. These areas offer places to restore and conserve fish, forest, and wildlife resources and provide opportunity for citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. Conservation Areas are different than state or local parks that may place a greater emphasis on recreational activities.

Appendix 2. Springfield Conservation Nature Center Business Cards

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

As Peck Ranch Conservation Area nears its 70th year, the Missouri Department of Conservation is seeking visitor input to develop an area management plan to guide the next 10 years.

Submit ideas or comments
online at

<mdc.mo.gov/areaplans>



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Appendix 3. Springfield Conservation Nature Center Hard Copy Comment Form



We Want To Hear From You

As the Peck Ranch Conservation Area nears its 70th year, the Missouri Department of Conservation is seeking visitor input to develop an Area Management Plan to guide the next 10 years.

Here's your opportunity to share your ideas and comments.

Name _____

Your email: _____

Organization affiliation (if any): _____

Complete mailing address: _____

Space on the back side for your written ideas and comments.

**Please return your completed comment form
to the front desk or mail it to:**

Peck Ranch Conservation Area
RR 1 Box 1395
Winona MO 65588-9726

You can also share your ideas online at:
mdc.mo.gov/areaplans





We hope to hear from a broad range of public interests and will listen to and consider all ideas for improving this area.

Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into the Area Management Plan and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical

and biological conditions and capabilities, available financial and staffing resources, the professional expertise of Department staff, and on the best role of the property in its local, regional and statewide context.

Your ideas and comments: _____

Stay in touch:

- ☐ Yes, email me with progress of this Area Management Plan.
- ☐ Yes, email me updates on other Missouri Department of Conservation Area Management Plans as they are posted.



Missourians care about conserving forests, fish, and wildlife.

over



Appendix 4. Comments received during Peck Ranch Idea Gathering Phase (May 1-31, 2014).

Peck Ranch has been of interest to me to be able to visit for a long time. My husband and I would like to visit and explore this C.A. but the only way we would be able to do so would be by horseback. Our age and health restrains keep us from hiking but we are experienced trail riders and use horses to make a connection with the out-of doors. We would like to see designated equestrian trails be placed in and through Peck Ranch. Horseback riding allows us to keep active and adds to the quality of our lives. As a member of the Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen, while I am not representing the organization in this comment but acting as an individual, I know the organization would be a valuable resource to maintain and help manage trails for the benefit of the area and its resources. A great number of trail riders are older and can only experience these types of areas by horseback due to aging bodies, knees, and just general health issues.

My comment for Peck Ranch and its future management plan is to recognize the needs of older citizens and place a multiuse trail system in the area so all can enjoy this area. Peck Ranch is large enough to support multiuse trails while not interfering with the more delicate environmental areas. Trail riders such as I just ask to be treated equally and fairly with the rest of Missouri's trail users. Our tax dollars should reflect our being able to experience Peck Ranch.

I would like to see equestrian access to Peck Ranch along with a trail to connect with the existing trails that have been developed.

Peck Ranch Conservation Area can provide a great opportunity for outdoor enthusiast of all types please strongly consider including designated equestrian trails in the management plan. Including equestrian trails will provide an opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. And the trails will attract visitors to produce revenue and a way of life for the surrounding communities. Everyone needs and should have the right to access our public lands to enjoy them. Without access, these lands will be tucked away for no one to admire and revenue across the state will be loss. Horseback riding is a valid form of recreation on our public lands and horseback riders believe in using the land, not abusing by practicing leave no trace behind.

As a concerned citizen of Missouri, I understand public lands need to be protected but not to the degree of closing areas for public use for any type of recreation. I believe the best method to address this matter is to create designated trails for horseback riders. Please keep the parks and trails open and available for use now and in the future. Missouri is home to beautiful places to offer and recreational businesses will continue to benefit greatly along with other businesses that rely on the visitors to the areas by having the trails.

Thank you for your time.

I would like to see a continuation of the MOFEP Project on Peck Ranch. You guys are doing a great job already at the Conservation Area.

I've deer hunted outside of Peck Ranch for about 40 years and in that time I've seen access to roads decline. That may be great for the people that are the age I was when I started hunting there but at my age now, it's just getting too hard to walk several miles into an area where I once parked my jeep and then walked a mile or so. I'm afraid that after you finish taking suggestions on May 31st, you will proceed with whatever plan you had in mind on May 1st with no regard for the locals that do use the area regularly.

Equestrian trails should be included in the management plan. The area is large enough to support well designed multiuse trails that avoid any perceived damage to sensitive areas.

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for allowing us, as the users, to participate in the development of the Peck Ranch management plan.

I am an equestrian trail rider, and believe that this large acreage can support a designated equestrian trail system. This can be done with well designed multiuse trails that avoid any damage to sensitive areas. This is a beautiful area, and it would be ashamed to exclude equestrian trail riders.

I look forward to further discussion on the establishment of a multi use trail system.

Thank you again for allowing me to comment.

Sincerely,

I am a resident of Missouri - born and raised, never left the state - and I am an avid hunter, fisherman, and equestrian. I thoroughly enjoy and appreciate all Missouri has to offer. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this subject.

MDC needs to seriously consider creating lengthy designated equestrian trails in Peck Ranch. The trails should also connect to the existing trails to provide a trail system that offers several options to make a journey longer, shorter, or just different. Managed equestrian trails are an asset to MDC and Missouri (the local economy would definitely reap the benefits of visitors to the area). Missouri has a lot to offer, please share with the equestrians.

I am interested in having this conservation area designated with multiuse trails for horse back riding. I ride extensively in Missouri and truly enjoy the opportunities to get into the woods and enjoy our beautiful state.

Please consider opening this beautiful conservation area to horseback activities - trailriding. To truly enjoy this area a campground with overnight parking areas, corrals and water for horses to overnight, and bathroom facilities - similar to the Custer State Park in South Dakota - would allow money to come into the park as horseback riders use the area and help to maintain a camping area - and open the area to be enjoyed by many. This is such an important endeavour as we see horses not allowed into beautiful conservation areas, when in fact when given

proper facilities and encouragement this group will help support and give back to the parks where horses are allowed.

Open Peck Ranch CA to horseback riding (trail riding)

Our family have backpacked at the Peck Ranch several times over the past decade. However, now at age 70, my wife and I no longer have the knees to even hike the trails. Our only recourse to enjoy the trails and wild areas of Missouri is on horseback. We would like for us and all those who can ride but can't hike to have equestrian trails and a horse-camp at Peck Ranch.

Thank you

Over 23,000 acres and local wildlife is a wonderful resource to share. In the management of Peck Ranch, it would be of major importance that there be established lengthy equestrian trails. This would facilitate connection of other trails which now border or are being developed adjacent to Peck Ranch. Well managed equestrian trails can be an asset to MDC and if properly developed should not be a threat to the environment.

For many years equestrians have asked for access or a trail which connects to either end of Peck Ranch as equestrian there are trails that abut The Ranch.

If such was established, this would also bolster the local economy as can be seen by the prevalence of horse and mule owners in the immediate area as well as the number of people who travel from other states and Missouri to ride and spend money in that area. I personally travel 3 weeks a year to this part of Missouri to enjoy the wonderful scenery and outdoor experience by horseback and look forward to seeing Peck Ranch.

I would like to see equestrian trails in then Peck Ranch Conservation Area. I'm 68 years old and trail riding in the beautiful natural areas of Missouri are what keeps me going. Having trails in the Peck Ranch Area open to equestrians would help eliminate overuse of other trails. For me personally it would provide opportunities for me to take my grand children trail riding in some of Missouri's most scenery.

Would love to see a multiuser trail system that includes equestrian trails. My friends and I travel all over mo and to many neighboring states to experience beautiful natural settings in which to ride, but not disturb. A multiuser camping facility would be great for those of us traveling for a visit,

When looking into the next ten years of management for the Peck area as an avid horseback rider I and my family would love to see some horse trails developed an maintained. That part of our state is a treasure to be enjoyed by all Missourians and tourists. Missouri has a large equine population and riders are in need of trails to enjoy. Please take into consideration the needs of horseback enthusiasts along with hikers and bikers. We ride yearly in Colorado and Wyoming with the herds of elk out there with no problems. Further developing this area and drawing interest will help to further educate Missouri about our elk herd and the region of our

state which has the potential to draw in much needed tourist money.
Include Horse Trail Riding in your Plan.
Please open this area up for horseback riding. We have bought recreational land in this area and would welcome more horse trails
I love riding in Missouri! I grew up in this beautiful state and camped all thru the state and even though I live in Illinois now I still drive to Missouri to ride my horses. Continuing to add horse trails is an exciting idea.
<p>I would like to encourage you to consider the equestrian trail riders of the State of Missouri and surrounding states as you look to develop your management plan for Peck Ranch Conservation Area.</p> <p>As the NPS and ONSR look to close 65 miles of equestrian trails in our beautiful Ozarks or if the State takes over the management of the ONSR, it is likely the equestrian trail riders will have to fight for every trail they can.</p> <p>I realize Peck Ranch CA is a wilderness area in which elk have been released. This should be of no significance to trail riders as we ride out in Colorado, for an example, among elk, moose, and other wild life.</p> <p>I would be willing to set on a board to represent the equestrian trail riders and find a plan beneficial to all parties. Please do not discriminate against the trail riders of Missouri and surrounding states.</p> <p>Thank You.</p>
<p>Continuing with the active burning program and restoration of open woodlands, savannas and galdes is to be commended and continued.</p> <p>I don't know what your future plans are concerning the elk, what your budgets will be, or what public resistance (and even inhouse) would exist with a shift back to the way Peck Ranch used to be managed (foodplotted in about every opening on the area). The shift away from this strategy was probably cheaper and more palatable from an ecological perspective. However, I would think it would be pretty difficult to retain the elk on an area that does not contain alfalfa and over types of high protein exotic forages when these things DO exist outside the area and elk are not afraid to go find it. If this is the direction that MDC decides to go I think it would be a positive thing for hunters because turkey, deer, and elk would definitely respond well to it, especially with the woodland and glade work that will accompany it.</p> <p>I support landscape burning to maintain open woodland conditions and can even tolerate growing season burns if they are needed to achieve restoration objectives. However, growing season burns are often implemented to encourage and increase grasses over forbs (something elk would benefit from) and this would be detrimental to turkeys.</p>

I would like to see trails for equestrian use. I recently camped at Greenfelders Park in Eureka and it was a pleasure to see trail riders, hikers and mountain bikers using the same trails without conflicts. I feel we need more places like this so that everyone can see the beautiful scenery of Missouri.

I am 71 years of age enjoy being on my horse enjoying life.

One of the best ways to experience nature is by horseback. Incorporating designated non-motorized multi-use trails, open to horses, within Peck Ranch would facilitate this for many trail riders not only in the area but throughout the state. I encourage MDC to work toward the goal of developing non-motorized multi-use trails for Peck Ranch.

I would like to trail ride my horse in this area. I would like designated parking to be used for horse trailer. I would like to be able to camp with my horse, either primitive {no potable water} or with water and electricity for a fee. Either camping should have access for horses to have water.

I would like to see horse back riding designated trails put in. I'm enjoying riding with my great granddaughter and having her learn about nature and all of its beauty.

Missouri is a beautiful state. I would like to see us continue to be noticed as having the 'best horse trails' as we were awarded same last year. I have also heard MO as being "horse friendly". Trails can be multi-use and have horseback riders included.

We have been coming to Peck for many years. My two sons learned much of what they know about the outdoors hunting, hiking, camping, and exploring in and around Peck. My youngest son, now 21 years old, has gone into forestry at Mizzou I believe largely because of the impressions he formed in places like Peck.

Of the CA's we have visited, Peck is unique in its wild beauty. We believe it is important to retain as much of the wilderness characteristics of the area as possible. The logging that must be done for management purposes we support. We would oppose logging or other commercial operations on the area for revenue purposes.

One thing we have had some issue with is the illegal activities of locals on the area. We have encountered quite a few deer drives with dogs as well as spotlighting activity down in the Vermillion Bottoms. I believe limiting access points to the CA is the only way to counter this unless an army of conservation agents is hired.

I do believe a permanent manager on the area is a good expenditure of department funds.

We love this area and believe it is well managed and a true Missouri highlight.

Hi Folks,

Just wanted to share a couple ideas and questions from our membership about Peck.

The first is in regard to the annual closures from April to July. Could we please receive an explanation about why the trail needs to be closed? People have asked me if it is a safety issue with calving females or just a very cautious approach. It is a significant closure of a National Recreation Trail during a period that people who do long distance thru-hikes run into.

The second is in regard to alternate routes for mountain bikes to take around the refuge. Mountain biking is allowed on the Forest Service lands on either side of the refuge and there is a good chance that the NPS may allow multi-use from Hwy 106 to Rocky Falls in the future. We have a growing user group of bike packers who are eager to someday ride the OT for 225 miles from the western terminus of the Eleven Point section to the Huzzah CA.

Thanks for listening.

Matt Atnip
Executive Director
Ozark Trail Association

I believe the area is big enough to support Horse trails.

This idea should be considered in the planing.

Thank You

The Peck ranch is a beautiful area in our state. I think the area should be available for more people to enjoy. My husband and I are trailriders and we have used trails all over the state. Whenever, considering options for the Peck ranch I would appreciate your consideration of designated horse trails and equestrian camping area. Thank you.

Please open equestrian trails!!!!!!!!!!!!!! You have the land and Missouri has the horseback riders and the interest! Camping/ stall area.

Please allow horseback riding/horse camping. There is an excessive amount of hunting allowed in Missouri parks, but being able to ride is more limited.

I would like to be able to ride horses at peck ranch. This would be nice since you guys seem intent on closing down our horse riding at Emmenince .

Missouri is known for its terrific horse trails. So is TN & AR. To keep the business in the area, recommend pecks be opened up to horseback riders and a horsecamp be established with corrals, water and electric. You can charge people for the sites and start generating revenue.

We love riding on conservation ground and in the Mark Twain Forests. The more trails the better and give some of the older trails a rest and recover. Thank you MDC for the awesome job you have done in my lifetime of improving the balance of wildlife population and conserving precious resource.

Every few years I go to Missouri to ride my horse as I have friends there and the trails are fab. I always want more trails for horses and there are many places I can go and see on horseback that I cannot do on foot due to disabilities. Please open this to horse trails. thanx, Joyce

Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen (SMMBCH) wishes to make the following comment pertaining to the Missouri Department of Conservation management plan for Peck Ranch C.A.

SMMBCH is very aware of the uniqueness and beauty of Peck Ranch C.A. and the ways in which management can fulfill the MDC mission of wildlife and resource protection while promoting Missouri tourism through recreational public use. Viewing of the elk and future hunting opportunities has been promoted from the inception of the elk release program. SMMBCH is interested in promoting tourism and expanding public use through a long distance packing/riding multiuse trail. With the Peck Ranch C.A. acreage being over 23,000 acres, a multiuse trail giving passage through Peck Ranch C.A. is entirely possible without jeopardizing or disturbing wildlife or sensitive environments.

SMMBCH is asking the Peck Ranch C.A. management plan include a multiuse trail through Peck Ranch C.A. The Ozark Trail (OT), already in place, traverses Peck Ranch C.A. By Changing the OT designation to multiuse and allowing for a parallel trail where the OT and horse use is not feasible, a continuous trail from Steelville on the Courtois Section of the OT to the southern part of the state will be possible. The Missouri Department of Conservation is the only public land management agency not currently supporting the multiuse long distance trail concept. A simple change of trail designation would allow the long distance trail to become a reality for Missouri. SMMBCH is working within the confines of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways GMP to gain access through the ONSR which is Peck Ranch C.A.'s northern neighbor. The Mark Twain National Forest, Peck Ranch C.A.'s southern neighbor already supports multiuse trails.

SMMBCH is a not-for-profit volunteer organization of horsemen and women who are dedicated to working with and being of service to land managers by donating countless hours of volunteer service to maintain and develop multiuse trails. Volunteer hours for trail maintenance through Peck Ranch C.A. would be welcomed by the organization. SMMBCH also promotes Leave No Trace practices and has a high standard of trail ethics. SMMBCH has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with every public land manager within the state including the MDC.

In summary, SMMBCH is asking MDC strategy for the natural resource management and Public Use for Peck Ranch C.A., include a designated multiuse trail to allow passage through Peck Ranch C.A. This would allow for a continuous trail through Missouri for a packing and long distance riding opportunity.

We come to this area 2-3 times a year love riding horses in the area, would love to ride where the Elk roam as we do in the White Mountains, New Mexico. Colorado, and Wyo. wild Life stays calm as we quietly ride thru, what a great way to get back to nature, We are in our 70's and hate to travel to other states because we can not see Elk in this area. As you go out on trails

the only place you find trash is where a auto can park and kids party. Most riders respect the land as they want to continue using the Land. Walking trails would be nice, Camping areas could bring in a lot of moneys. We camp primitive but it is great when we find a place with a camp host, water and or electric. Mt. Vernon, Mo.

I would like to see trail riding at Peck Ranch and a connection to the Ozark Trail

I request that you please consider equestrian designated use for a multi-use (equestrian/hiking) trail that parallels the Ozark Trail to pass through Peck Ranch. For several years now, the Show Me Missouri Backcountry Horsemen (SMMBCH) has worked closely with MDC, the National Park Service, and the L-A-D Foundation to place an equestrian trail through the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry that parallels the OT and then joins the OT at Owls Bend on Park Service property and continue to the south. This trail section is part of a linear equestrian use trail that will hopefully one day begin in Steelville, MO and end in Arkansas. The success of this one of a kind in the nation project greatly depends on the MDC by allowing equestrian access through Peck Ranch. Please allow the already solid, time tested, and positive established relationship between MDC and SMMBCH flourish by joint planning and development of an equestrian trail system that protects Peck Ranch while providing positive economic growth for Shannon and surrounding counties and publicizing the desire of MDC to include all uses and users of the state of Missouri owned forests and conservation areas. An equestrian use trail of this length and magnitude does not exist anywhere in this area of the nation.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

We very much enjoy horseback riding in many of the MDC areas. Horseback riding, specifically trail riding, continues to grow in popularity and any additional trails would be greatly appreciated as it will serve many. Horseback is the only way many folk can access remote areas. Please include equestrian trails in your management plan for the Peck Conservation Area.

I think the size of the Peck Ranch area would allow for trails for equestrian use without taking away from it's natural resources and aspects. The BCH group is very effective at trail planning and management if they could be included in the trail planning, if it is approved. We also share trails with hikers and cyclists in some parks - it can work!!

I think the MDC should allow horse and mule use of the ranch. Those who enjoy horses and mules are some of your greatest conservationist and strive to keep trails clean. This conservation area is now the only obstacle of completing the Ozark Trail. This trail crosses Federal, and Private land . The only being our own MDC. Equestrian use should be encouraged.

We would enjoy seeing trails in the Peck Ranch area open to horse and mule trails. We like to ride different areas of Missouri. There are numerous riders from all over the state would like another place to ride their animals. It would bring in more tourism. Some of the areas where we ride people come from Minn, Iowa, Arkansas, Kansas and other states. Lots of people

enjoy riding their horses and mules.

I do hope you will consider opening the Ranch for trails. Thank you.

I would like to ask that multi use trails be put into Peck Ranch Conservation Area. As a horse owner and hunter I believe everyone should be able to enjoy Peck Ranch. I travel all over the mid west trail riding and Peck Ranch would greatly benefit from equestrian as well as other types of trails. The local economies would be greatly benefited.

We would like to request that designated equestrian trails should be included in the management plan for Peck Ranch Conservation Area. The area is large enough to support well designed multi-use trails that would avoid any perceived damage to sensitive areas. My husband and I are active members of Back Country Horseman of America and our local group SMMBCH stands ready to provide maintenance to these trails and share extensive knowledge on the best trail placement. It is imperative for all tax-payers including trail riders to be able to take advantage of the opportunity to explore this area on horseback and multi-use trails are the only way to make this area accessible for all who wish to experience the beauty of this area. I personally am disabled and unable to enjoy the beauty of this area and other conservation areas and National Parks by hiking. Horseback is the only way these areas are accessible to me and many others like myself. With out designated horse trails Peck Ranch Conservation Area will be impossible for me to enjoy the right of public access.

I hope you will consider keeping trails open for horseback riding. Our organization has a record of maintaining the trails we are able to ride on without any impact on sensitive areas.

I would love to see designated equestrian trails incorporated into future management planning for this area. SMMBCH stands ready to provide maintenance to these trails and share extensive our knowledge on the best trail placement. The area is large enough to support well designed multiuse trails that avoid any perceived damage to sensitive areas. We trail riders also wish to experience the beauty of this area on horseback.

As a member of the Ozark Trail Assoc. and the Show Me MO Back Country Horsemen. I would love to see the Ozark Trail opened to equestrian use. I realize the trail might need some "tweaking" or diversion from what it is now to avoid delicate areas, but the rewards would be great. Both of these organizations are good stewards of the land and are able and willing to help make this happen. In order for the Ozark Trail to be one continuous multi-use trail, Peck Ranch needs to and should be opened as a multi-use trail. I live nearby and know the beauty of Peck Ranch but road riding is not desirable. The only MDC equestrian trails that I know of within 200 miles are Angeline. Those are crowded with riders from Cross Country Trail Ride attendees. If the Ozark National Scenic Riverways approves the Ozark Trail as a multi-use trail through their property, then Peck Ranch should too. You will find that horse people are far better stewards of the land than the average hiker.

I request that MDC consider equine camping and the opening of trails to equestrians. Horse owners spend a lot of money traveling to camp and ride, and Missouri is fortunate to have a remarkable wealth of beautiful areas that would attract horse owners. Therefore, in the

interests of economic development, tourism, and providing more recreational opportunities to citizens of Missouri, I request the installation of equestrian camping facilities and the opening of trails at Peck Ranch CA to equestrians.

please include equestrian multiuse trails in this area

I believe that equestrian trails should be included in Peck Ranch. This would allow enjoyment of the ranch by trail riders who could also assist in maintenance of the trails. We are members of the Back Country Horsemen who are dedicated to designing and maintaining safe trails for equestrian use. Thank you.

I believe the Back Country Horsemen are willing to donate some hours helping out and with the Peck Ranch Conservation and we the equestrian riders would like to see some equestrian trails added to the project and it is my understanding that this something that could happen and please keep an open mind and consider all ideals.

I live in Mo. but will riding in Ca. this July. I'm lucky enough to live in a state that has some of the best riding trails, having said that, we do like to explore and ride trails in other states. Tourism does bring in money for the state please do not leave us out in your planning. Thanks

We ride our horses on the Ozark trail in our area. On our bucket list is to ride the Ozark trail from one end to the other. Access to Peck Ranch is needed to complete the Ozark trail. This could become a huge destination for horse back riders that ride the Ozark trail from one end to the other. We know a number of people that travel to Missouri just for the horse riding adventures and GREAT trails.

To MDC and Peck Ranch Management team,

Peck Ranch should be primarily managed for wildlife and natural communities' restoration. These current practices should be continued in the future.

Equestrian use should not be allowed on Peck Ranch. Horseback riders have hundreds of miles of trails, both legal and illegal, traversing the entire area on both private and public land. In addition there are hundreds of miles of unpaved roads available for riders. The claim made by some advocacy groups for the need of a packing and long distance riding opportunity is erroneous. Before there are any trails designated across Peck Ranch, a comprehensive management plan should be developed with all of the public and private land managers adjacent to Peck before this out of control activity be allowed to continue. Unrestrained equestrian use has had severe negative impacts to the public lands in the area.

Off road ATV trails and use should not be allowed to be developed on Peck Ranch for the same reasons as stated in for equestrian use.

I would like to see you include equestrian trails on the Peck Ranch Area. Properly laid out equestrian trails have no negative effect on the environment. All Missouri citizens pay taxes to support the MDC and all citizens should have the opportunity for responsible use of the

conservation areas, including equestrian use. Thank you for the opportunity for input.

We sure would love the opportunity to ride horses in this area. There appears to be plenty of room for trails and an equine parking area. Please consider including horseback riding in the planning of this beautiful area. We are happy to help maintain trails. Thanks very much!

My husband and I trail ride almost every weekend on horses and use a lot of conservation areas. We live in the Franklin County and St. Louis area but also use the South West area by Springfield and even more north. We also go more southern area from us. As we get older horseback riding allows us to experience remote areas of the state. We would greatly appreciate equestrian trails being added to the management plan.

(Hard copy comment) The Peck Ranch Conservation Area has many unique features. Would like to see those areas enhanced. My interests stems from growing up on the area from 1954-1966.